

### ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A method of recovering base metal from a tailings dump which includes the steps of: aerating a surface layer of the dump; adjusting the pH and the moisture content of the surface layer to provide conditions favourable for bacterial oxidation of sulphide minerals; allowing bacterial oxidation to take place for a controlled period; after the controlled period removing the oxidized surface layer and adding water thereto for form a slurry; separating the slurry into solids and a solution; and recovering base metal from the solution.